

“Pursuing Nature to Her Hiding-Places”:

Gothic Ecofeminism in *Frankenstein*

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Abstract

This paper explores Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a text that deconstructs the binaries of identity; through the introduction of “gothic ecofeminism” as a critical approach, the productive use of a spectrum of identity is exposed. Overlapping strands of ecocritical and feminist concerns are prevalent throughout the text, but by themselves these approaches affirm Victor as a “human” and the creature as “non-human,” and Victor as “male” and the creature as “not-quite male,” reifying the binary opposites which create conflict between the two characters. With the addition of gothic theory, one notes that fear comes from the attempt to break down traditional duality. Fear of transgression is only diminished when Victor and the creature view themselves not as opposites, but as two points on a scale of masculinity and femininity, nature and artifice, human and inhuman; the creature becomes relatable to Victor when his identity is accepted not as the subordinate of a binaric hierarchy, but as a complex system of identity markers, made visible by a spectrum of gothic ecofeminism.

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to Mary Shelley, who knew both the pleasures and sorrows of a spark of life, and managed to harness the flash of inspiration that comes from good company and brilliant friends.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a novel filled with binaries. The oppositional pairing that is “human” vs. “non-human” makes up the very essence of the text: what is the nature of the creature, and how do we identify with him?¹ Indeed, the novel explores many other binaries through the comparison of Victor Frankenstein with his creature: parent vs. child, masculine vs. feminine, and nature vs. artifice. Thus, critics read the work in terms of these pairs, asking which side of the binary the two characters best exhibit. In “Female Gothic,” Ellen Moers draws attention to Shelley's “concern with the emotions surrounding the parent-child and child-parent relationship” (98), as well as “Shelley's fantasy of the newborn as at once monstrous agent of destruction and piteous victim of parental abandonment” (97).² In *Gothic and Gender: An Introduction*, Donna Heiland suggests similar binary pairings, such as “the boundaries between culture and nature, human and inhuman, parent and child, male and female” which “all seem threatened by Victor and his creation” (98). In “*Frankenstein* and the Sublime,” Anne K. Mellor describes the moral dichotomy explored through her classroom discussions. Through his good and bad actions, the creature “represents the confrontation of the human mind with an unknowable nature, with the experience that eighteenth-century philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke called the sublime” (101). Mellor's introduction of the moral binary introduces a kind of individual sublimity; what is both known and unknown resides within the person of the creature, resulting in Victor's terrified response. Although Mellor's discussion determines that the creature's goodness is destroyed because “he has been denied access to human community, to female companionship, to parental care, to love” (103), her discussion reinforces the idea that the creature must be judged as good or bad, known or unknown. Elsewhere, Mellor writes in “Making a ‘Monster’: An Introduction to *Frankenstein*,” that there is a dichotomy of natural and artificial science: “From Erasmus Darwin, who first theorized the process of botanical and biological evolution through sexual selection, Mary Shelley derived her belief that a good

1 I have chosen to refer to the creature by male pronouns, even though I argue that the creature exhibits both male and female characteristics; to refer to the creature as “it” denies the part of the creature that is human and not object. The creature is, of course, explicitly male in the text, but the question of its humanity raises the question of biological sex; Victor chooses the creature's male anatomy, but on seeing the creature, diminishes him to a “monster,” which in this text appears to be perceived as sexless. A question for another study may be how sexuality functions within the persona of the explicitly villainous character in the gothic.

2 See Margaret Homans’ “Bearing Demons: Frankenstein's Circumvention of the Maternal.”

scientist attempts, not to alter the workings of nature, but rather to observe,” and to see nature's processes “closely in order to understand” (18).³ In *Making Monstrous: Frankenstein, Criticism, Theory*, Fred Botting writes, “the novel, with its recurrent motif of the Stranger, raises questions about the possibility of attaining any knowledge of things in the world” (37), echoing the binary of the known and unknown noted by Mellor. Botting also summarizes Northrop Frye's reading of *Frankenstein* as a text devoid of a consistent moral code (37); but the desire for less moral ambiguity within the text reinforces the opposition of good vs. evil, exposing the critical desire to compartmentalize both Victor and the creature into a side which determines their nature.

The Critical Problem

The preceding examples demonstrate the desire to answer the philosophical questions of the text: which of the two, Frankenstein or the creature, is the true villain? Is the creature inherently good? Is he a child? Does he exhibit female qualities? As for Victor, should he abandon the creature, or should he not have created it in the first place? To me, these questions are not very interesting.⁴ The true complexity of the text comes when one accepts that Victor and the creature exhibit characteristics from both sides of the binaries that they are perceived to inhabit. Binaries are reductive in nature: while partially useful as constructions of categories, by association, they deny the possibility for individuality within larger stereotypes. *Frankenstein* is best viewed through a lens of multiple dimensions because the main problem of the text is that Victor and the creature fit a little too easily into the human vs. non-human construct: while other critics note Victor and the creature's self-positioning in the binary opposites, it is the characters' inability to fit within either pairing which is the source of their inner conflict. The creature may be perceived as human because of his rationality, and Victor may be perceived as inhuman through his abandonment of both the creature and his responsibility for the deaths that the creature later causes. *Frankenstein* demonstrates the inadequacy and impossibility of binary

3 See Fred Botting's “*Frankenstein* and the Art of Science,” Anne K. Mellor's “A Feminist Critique of Science,” and Samuel Holmes Vashbinder's *Scientific Attitudes in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*.

4 Notably, all of these questions seem to be answered with both the affirmative and negative; with that in mind, perhaps there is no “yes” or “no” answer to these questions. One should really be asking: “Until what point is the creature good?”, “What role does the creature's feminization have in our sympathies for him?”, and finally, “On which count is Victor most culpable? Or, are Victor's reactions to consequences more indicative of his character than his initial actions?”; gothic ecofeminism assumes that there are more intriguing answers to these questions.

pairings, therefore making a new critical approach necessary. As Victor and the creature attempt to fit within one side or the other of the pairing, Shelley shows through the characters' desires and failures that such dualistic approaches to identity offers them no ability to embrace the parts of their identities that lie outside their respective binary half, resulting in their unhappiness. If identity is considered as a spectrum rather than treated as a set of opposites, it is possible to see why Victor and the creature are so unsuccessful in their pursuits: portions of their identity conflict with their attempts to fit comfortably within the identity roles assigned to them. Victor tries to assume masculinity while being a mother-figure, and the creature attempts to be accepted as human despite his non-human origin. Identity in *Frankenstein* can be better explained by a combination of three theoretical areas: feminism, ecocriticism, and the gothic, or gothic ecofeminism, which demonstrates the multidimensional nature of identity. Although feminism and ecocriticism are anachronistic terms in Mary Shelley's time period, the idea that identity is fluid, or that it exists on a spectrum of gender, nature, or fearfulness, is certainly a theme throughout the text.⁵ Victor and the creature exemplify the tendency to erroneously divide oneself into a binary, as well as the capability for existing in a spectrum of gendered and natural identity; paradoxically, they are able to experience different facets of identity across the range of the gendered and natural spectrum, but are limited by their own minds forcing them to think in binary opposites.

The first section of my argument will explain what gothic ecofeminism is, and how it can be applicable to *Frankenstein*.⁶ Finally, I will explain how Victor and the creature awkwardly try

5 The OED's first usage of "feminism," referring to the rights of women, occurs in 1895, and becomes more widespread in 1905. While Shelley would have been aware of the movement for "the rights of women" by this time, the term "feminism" as I use it connotes the set of theories surrounding gender inequity, which is not restricted by race, age, or even gender as it is for much of the 1900s; the constructed roles of femininity and masculinity are important concepts in my usage of the term. It must be noted that this particular usage is not a contemporary concept for Shelley, but no less applicable to the text. According to the OED, "gothic" is defined as: "Of or designating a genre of fiction characterized by suspenseful, sensational plots involving supernatural or macabre elements and often (esp. in early use) having a medieval theme or setting." To complicate the definition somewhat, the OED notes that "the novel typically regarded as the first of this genre, *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) by Horace Walpole, is subtitled 'a gothic story' in reference to its medieval setting." The novel is both gothic in the macabre sense, and gothic in the medieval sense, helping to confuse the definition even further. The OED notes that "gothic" is recognized as a literary genre as early as 1825.

6 The source text for this essay is M.K. Joseph's edition of *Frankenstein*, which uses the 1831 edition as its copy text. The latter edition contains embellishments – especially from Victor's earliest years – which fill out the description of his character to greater effect. Victor is emblematic of a dominant person subjugating both other

to fit themselves within traditional binary structures, but are unable to do so because traditional binary structures cannot do justice to the complex identity of each of these fictional characters. The creature's appearance, the setting of the text, the relationships that Victor and the creature form, and the creature's morality suggest that gender, nature, and fear are a complex set of identity spectrums. Gothic theory accentuates the feelings of anxiety that are present as genders, nature, culture, beauty, and morality clash; gothic tropes exaggerate Shelley's anxieties regarding science and childbirth into a being that literally speaks and acts on behalf of wronged nature and abused biology. Victor's attitudes which lead to his objectification and subordination of the creature and women belong to the same set of assumptions that leads to the destruction and overconsumption of nature. Fear is realized where the two sides of any dichotomy meet, clash, and diverge. Victor and the creature are presented by Shelley so as to blur the boundaries of the prescribed roles they inhabit, challenging the binary notions of gender, nature, and even fear itself, suggesting that their identities can best be viewed on a gothic ecofeminist spectrum.

What is Gothic Ecofeminism?

Gothic Ecofeminism is the combination of three literary theories that have been applied separately to *Frankenstein* in previous criticism. Ecocriticism and feminism have a social imperative; in contrast, gothic theory evaluates the parts of literature which do not delve in reality, but in the realm of the supernatural. Moers writes, “‘the gothic’ is not so easily stated except that it has to do with fear. In gothic writings, fantasy predominates over reality, the strange over the commonplace, and the supernatural over the natural, with one definite auctorial intent: to scare” (90). Gothic theory represents the tension in the way of creating that social change; gothic fear is the expression of social anxiety taken to its greatest extreme. Vengeful nature and monstrous women are tropes of gothic texts because they represent areas of society where there is tension between those with power and authority and those who are othered and objectified. While

people and nature around him; the in-depth descriptions in the 1831 edition regarding his childhood with Elizabeth (34-6) and Victor's “penetration” of nature (39) demonstrate that Shelley felt that the earliest edition did not add enough to show the beginnings of Victor's perspective. Perhaps the additions to the text are in order to prime the reader to Victor's attitudes, to show how the innocence of his early thoughts become more dangerous as they result in his reckless subjugation of others. Nora Crook's “In Defense of the 1831 *Frankenstein*” describes the various benefits of using the 1831 text above the 1818 edition; she states “there is a greater concern with exploring ‘the mysteries of our nature’” (3) within the latest edition.

gothic texts “emphasize the physiological” (Moers 91) with the macabre descriptions and horrific details, gothic texts also ask deeper questions of a social nature. In *Gothic Masculinity*, Ellen Brinks asks:

If a male subject can be inhabited, displaced, or self-alienated, even temporarily, by uncanny forces that unleash, precipitate, or coincide with effeminizing effects, in what sense does he possess a masculine identity? (12)

Although Brinks' question is tailored to her subject, it can be modified to others as well: in short, when the gothic challenges basic notions of gender, nature, and parentage, how is identity as a whole challenged? These are the issues that gothic theory allows us to see when used in conjunction with ecocriticism and feminism in *Frankenstein*: Victor and the creature exist on spectrums of gendered, natural, and cultural identity, and fear dictates their rationalization for where they should exist on these spectrums of identity: the social perception of their prescribed roles is ever at odds with where they actually exist, causing their internal and external conflict. In *Frankenstein*, the feminist and ecocritical values demonstrate the potential for equality, while the gothic tropes metaphorize the societal obstructions to achieving a solution to inequity. Together, ecocriticism and feminism demand change to find those solutions, and gothic theory explains how social change is obstructed.

Why Individual Theories Are Inadequate

The three theories that make up the basis for gothic ecofeminism has been variously applied to *Frankenstein*, but used individually or in pairs. Combining these three theoretical approaches into a spectrum effectively exposes the dangers of creating binary categories; using two theories tends to reinforce dualistic thinking by reinforcing the tendency to compare, contrast, and weigh one theory more heavily than another.

a. Ecocriticism

Nature plays a significant role in gothic texts as an expression of the inner turmoil of the characters. It can even serve as a source of fear; Allan Lloyd-Smith explores the idea of the American wilderness as a site of fear and unknown in *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction*. *Frankenstein's* exploration of ecocritical gothic themes is limited, but the theoretical background

exists especially in Lloyd-Smith's work, and in Fred Botting's chapter on the modern gothic, in his appropriately-named text, *Gothic*. In *Frankenstein*, nature becomes a site of terror during the scene in the Alps, where the magnitude of the sublime wilderness and an oncoming storm signals the arrival of the creature whom Victor fears. In addition, the opening and closing scenes of the novel are set in the isolated, dangerous, and ultimately fatal Arctic continent.⁷ These moments in the text where nature itself exudes terror are especially important for a gothic ecocritical reading; such an approach would go beyond nature as a function of fear, exploring how *Frankenstein* indicates a growing concern with scientific hubris and the abuse of nature. A key distinction of ecocriticism (and feminism) from other literary fields is that there is an implicit attempt to catalogue, recognize, and change behaviour.⁸ On its own, a gothic ecocritical approach to *Frankenstein* lacks investigation into Victor's predisposition to use both nature and women at his disposal.

b. Feminism

Feminist study illuminates Shelley's text in terms of the way that Elizabeth is treated, the way that Victor blends her with the figure of his mother, and the feminized aspects of the creature's character. However, a tendency of early feminism to concentrate on the women alone means that other gender inequities – such as the unfortunate constructions of Victor's masculinity – are often ignored. Similarly, gothic feminist studies often focus on the female as a victim; indeed, Justine and Elizabeth become the victims of horrific deaths as a result of their vulnerability.⁹ But again, without the additional reading of the creature's agency and point of view, it is easy to overlook the creature as a product of his inability to fit within either a human or non-human binary. An ecofeminist approach to *Frankenstein* might evaluate how the creature's unnatural “birth” questions Victor's biology.¹⁰ If the creature is also a man, how does that challenge Victor's

7 Critics of American gothic theory note that wilderness plays an important factor in that nation's horror tales. See Allan Lloyd Smith's *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction*.

8 See Lawrence Buell, “Toxic Discourse” and Christine Flanagan, “The Superfund Gothic: Susanne Antonetta's *Body Toxic: An Environmental Memoir*.”

9 See 'Heroines' *The Handbook of the Gothic* Ed. Marie Mulvey-Roberts.

10 Ecofeminism is by Glynis Carr as “the intertwined cultural and political issues that arise in consequence of 'the woman/nature analogy,’” which is defined by Karen J. Warren as “the connections – historical, empirical, conceptual, theoretical, symbolic, and experiential – between the domination of women and the domination of nature” (Carr 16).

masculinity? If the creature belongs to him, is Victor the mother or father? These are profitable questions, but the fear that society views the creature with is equally important as a social barometer; fear of difference demonstrates a society's inability to see beyond dualism, while acceptance comes from recognizing the inefficacy of othering the subordinate binary.

c. Gothic Theory

Frankenstein is clearly a gothic text as it exhibits all of the fear, suspense, and macabre trappings that the genre most often includes. In addition, the text can be analyzed with a gothic feminist approach because Elizabeth is so similar to the “gothic heroine” who is typically secluded, chased, or made vulnerable to the whims of the villain. Diane Long Hoeveler notes that the female gothic heroine is “feminine, virginal, innocent, and good” (10) much, indeed, like Elizabeth and Justine. But the gothic feminist approach is also useful when analyzing the creature; he weeps, craves the company of others, and desires emotional connection to his parent, the absent Victor. These are acceptable norms of behaviour, but they are certainly not stereotypically masculine. The creature is neglected, and not socially conditioned to fulfil a masculine role. Without looking at how nature plays a role in the creature's being, one might not see how the creature effectively breaks oppositional binaries.

How do Victor and the Creature Blur the Lines of Binaries?

The inefficacy of the three theories by themselves or in pairs demonstrates that a triad of overlapping theories accounts for the more complex nature of Victor and his creature. The following issues are ways in which the creature and Victor do not fit into traditional binaries; as they attempt to fit into one or the other, it is apparent that their identities are too complex to allow them to fit. Gothic ecofeminism locates the spectrum on which each character effectively exists; Shelley demonstrates their inability to fit neatly into a male-female, beautiful-ugly, natural-artifice, dominant-subordinate binary. The gothic ecofeminist spectrum allows us to place Victor and the creature within a state of being that could potentially enable them to eclipse the fear that comes as a result of their inability to fit within such roles, or at the very least allow the audience to see how their fears and difference could be overcome.

The Appearance of the Creature

Victor's perception of the creature is based on the latter's perceived aesthetic value, but in truth, the creature cannot exist fully within the binary of beautiful vs. ugly, because it cannot fit into either. The creature exists on a spectrum of physical beauty contrasting with ugliness. At the sight of his creature, Victor is immediately scornful, crying "Beautiful! --- Great God!" (57) questioning why it should fill him with "breathless horror and disgust" when he had so carefully "selected" the creature's "features as beautiful" (57), although ironically by morbid means, in graves and slaughterhouses. Frankenstein declares, "his limbs were in proportion ... his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes ... the dun-white sockets ... and [his] straight black lips" (57). One thinks of human beauty as having "proportion," lustre, or "teeth of pearly whiteness," but the creature's mimicry of the features has made the aesthetic horrifying. In addition, his fearsome appearance comes as a result of his uncanny appearance.¹¹ The creature signifies a natural being (man) but because of the key differences in appearance, the relationship between him and what is natural is deconstructed; the uncertain reality of the creature's humanity breaks down the perception of the creature as human. The creature is unrecognizable, because he embodies elements of beauty and horror, of human-like qualities and artificiality. He cannot become either an object of beauty or ugliness, or completely female or male in appearance. The creature's artificiality is what makes him ugly, not just his visage; in addition, the uncanny valley further divides the creature from humanity. Despite the creature's capacity for emotion and reason, it is his ugly and uncanny appearance that dichotomizes him. To be fair, his corpse-like construction is repulsive, but Victor is more concerned about his *fault* in playing with nature than with the creature's ugliness. And although he feels guilt and shame, he feels no responsibility for it. Victor also uses this dual value of aesthetic to judge his creature before it can even prove itself,

11 Frank E. Pollick writes in "Search for the Uncanny Valley" that a Japanese engineer hypothesized that the more human-like a non-human object becomes, the more likely it is to instill anxiety or fear. The engineer, Masahiro Mori, suggested that movement could "deepen the uncanny valley" because both form and movement create expectation in the viewer: if the robot moves without perfect human likeness, it can create dissociation for the viewer. The same example can be seen with corpses, zombies, and other similar figures. See Figure 1, p. 70.

but if he viewed the creature as existing on a spectrum of aesthetics, he might take the time to see what he has in common with the creature, rather than the latter's uncanniness. The creature occupies a space on the spectrum of gendered aesthetics which places him outside of all others. Does this mean that the creature offers a new division at which to create a binary? Rather, I think that because the creature does not fit on either side of the existing hierarchy, he exists within a combination of beauty and ugliness, real and unreal (the uncanny) and none of these areas is able to absorb him fully.

In addition, the appearance of the creature can be said to be indeterminately gendered. His features can also be feminized, as we think of female features being “lustrous”(57) and sensual. In addition, the creature's immense strength and obvious size seem to gender him male, but the creature is most often associated with females. In this sense, the beauty that the creature mimics is not only false, but falsely female. Furthermore, on his first night by himself, he becomes ““a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept”” (103). He is divided from his masculinity by his sensitivity and his immediate proclivity to cry from pain. His “orphaned” status also indicates that while he is parent-less, Frankenstein is childless, and yet has the responsibility of having a child.¹² The creature transgresses not only the boundary of human vs. non-human, but also of male vs. female.

The Parent-Child Conundrum

Victor does not fit within feminine or masculine parental roles either. Both in thought and deed, Victor's conflicting persona comes from embodying parts of both genders. U.C. Knoepfelmacher (1979) expands on Ellen Moers' work on the maternity of *Frankenstein*, suggesting that the text is “a fantasy designed to relieve deep personal anxieties over birth and death and identity” (quoted in Mishra 198). Moers writes in “Female Gothic”: “*Frankenstein* is a birth myth, and one that was lodged in the novelist's imagination, I am convinced, by the fact that she was herself a mother” (92), and through Shelley's motherhood of the text, she evokes some of her personal anxieties of having children, comparable to Frankenstein's anxiety of creating an

¹² Mary Poovey sees the text itself as a child-substitute; by her authorship, Shelley's writing of the text becomes an “act of midwifery” (Mishra 200), suggesting that the creature and the text are both children to their creators.

unknown child.¹³ Knoepfelmacher's and Moers' work demonstrates that the creature is often seen as a parentless child. Victor and the creature's relationship, caused by a rupture of the natural and social order of things, demonstrates Victor's guilt, but not for making the creature or abandoning his paternal responsibility: his guilt is a result of his cowardly reluctance to take responsibility for the creature. The creature becomes gendered female because his inability to fend for himself and overcome his creator's ineptitude make him "weak," given that independence is a masculine trait; however, he is still biologically and visibly male, making his place on the gendered binary conflicted. On the gender spectrum, however, there is a place for the creature to be both a male and also have emotional needs. Frankenstein and his creature exhibit masculine and feminine roles, challenging gender roles as well as their biological natures. Thus, they become frightening to one another: Frankenstein fears and hates his creature because of the creature's ugliness reflecting on the former, while the creature fears the loneliness forced on himself by his own existence. On the gothic ecofeminist spectrum of identity, fear of the other is diminished because the characters on the spectrum are allowed to coexist and relate to each other meaningfully, because antagonism has been removed with the deconstruction of the binary structure.

Masculinity & Manliness

Victor is seemingly at odds with his own masculinity, or manliness, as the term would be for Shelley's time period.¹⁴ The novel is seemingly unconcerned with Victor's expressions of manliness, given that he is overcome by his own frantic emotions when Clerval resuscitates him

13 Mark Rubenstein looks to the love letters that passed between Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, in which Mary Shelley must have noted both birth and death simultaneously: "The return of this repressed material indicates guilt and longing for a mother, the anxieties of prospective motherhood and the possibility of producing a monstrous and abandoned child" (Botting 93). Frankenstein desires a being that will give him gratitude in the way of a parent-child relationship, but the guilt he feels when he procures the being is indicative of potential maternal anxieties. Maternal anxiety is topical for Shelley at the time, because of the recent loss of one her newborn children.

14 According to the OED, "manly" is defined as the "manner regarded as typical of a man as distinguished from a woman; manfully, nobly; courageously, fiercely," while masculinity, "the assemblage of qualities regarded as characteristic of men; maleness, manliness," is first used in 1748, and not in collective usage again until 1865 when it is used pejoratively to describe rural women who affect behaviours of the male gender. The next usage from the OED is in 1882, to describe parts of speech; following that in 1938, the author uses the terms not to refer to gender, but to biological sex. It is not until 1972 when masculinity is used as a term to describe behaviour which is also affected by men to indicate "maleness."

(70), and he is unable to take responsibility for the death of William in order to save Justine from unlawful execution. Masculine traits as we characterize them today are more in line with Victorian masculinity, where the divisions of the sexes become more predominant. Erin Mackie writes in *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century*, that “forms of masculine prestige change over time with the shifting nature of patriarchy itself,” and “through three centuries speaks to the ways in which masculine power continues to rely on modes of privilege, aggression, and self-authorization” (2). While Victor is not physically aggressive, he is intellectually aggressive, privileged by his status enabling him to be a scholar, and delves into his studies of re-animation without questioning his own ability. In this sense, Victor does exhibit the masculine traits of his time. Each of these traits implicitly suggests a desire for control; Victor is unable to maintain control over science, nature, and his creature, but more importantly, loses control over his social responsibility, given to him by self-authority, to take responsibility for his actions. In “*Frankenstein: Self-Division and Projection*,” William Veeder continues this line of thinking, stating “at their best, Robert Walton and Victor Frankenstein balance gender traits admirably. Their 'manly' qualities – ambition, daring, scientific intelligence, physical hardihood – are tempered by a sympathetic love of neighbour which manifests itself publicly in concern for human welfare and privately in affection for Margaret and Elizabeth” (81). By contrast, I argue that their ambitions and daring are hardly “tempered” when it is Frankenstein's experiment and Walton's desire for glory which result in them both being stranded in ice, the former chasing death, and the latter not far behind. Veeder goes on to suggest that the two men tend toward “erotic extremism,” since masculine and feminine traits “polarize into willfulness and weakness,” at which point their concern for society and the objects of their affection “are seriously undermined” (81). Veeder sees willfulness as particularly masculine, and he writes: “Mary is clear: will is regressive ... for both Robert and Victor, the consequence of immature willfulness is isolation” (85). More than just isolation, the two men are left with loneliness, uncertainty, and death; maybe not for Walton, but we can presume that Walton's experiences are no less traumatic even though he does not himself die at the end of the text.¹⁵

15 It may be worthwhile to note that Walton's future beyond the text is ambiguous; he does not die to our knowledge, but his situation is dire.

Manliness and masculinity have roots in the same desire to split the stereotypical male into a set of characteristics, which neither Victor nor Walton fit into conveniently.

Science, Knowledge & Power Over Nature

Frankenstein is obsessed with the possibilities of science, at first taking joy in his control and later becoming conflicted. However, Victor's conception of nature as a benevolent force is only declared when he is calm. His spiritual connection with springtime coincides unsurprisingly with his increased better health. Contrastingly, the mountains seem to emphasize his fears when he confronts the creature in the Alps:

The surface is very uneven, rising like the waves of a troubled sea, descending low, and interspersed by rifts that sink deep ... the opposite mountain is a bare perpendicular rock. From the side where I now stood Montanvert was exactly opposite ... and above it rose Mont Blanc, in awful majesty. I remained in a recess of the rock, gazing on this wonderful and stupendous scene. (98)

The “troubled rifts” of the ice, the bareness of the rock, and the “awful majesty” of the scene foreshadow what is about to come. And yet, Victor allows himself a moment of peace: “My heart, which was before sorrowful, now swelled with something like joy” (98). But he mistakes his moment of peace for a reprieve, as he calls aloud, “‘Wandering spirits, if indeed ye wander, and do not rest in your narrow beds, allow me this faint happiness, or take me, as your companion, away from the joys of life’” (98). Almost immediately, he sees the creature a short distance away. The juxtaposition of his request and the creature that gives him sorrow suggests that such spirits do not pity him, as they immediately take away his “faint happiness.” This moment of irony in the mountains demonstrates Victor's unfortunate understanding of nature: if indeed the “spirits” exist, they have sent the creature to him once again to turn his peace of mind into fear.

By having Victor fail at his experiment, Shelley's text implicitly discourages interference in natural processes, but it does not attempt to deny the existence of humanity's seemingly natural curiosity. Frankenstein's exercise of control over nature is often compared to religious concerns of playing God. Frankenstein decides to “pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe

their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should *deserve* theirs” (54; emphasis added). However, Diana Reese writes in “A Troubled Legacy: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the Inheritance of Human Rights” that “the novel's political import resides less in the problem of man becoming god than it does within the paradoxes of man becoming ‘man’” (48). It sometimes seems as if Frankenstein is attempting to become God, but Reese's hint is interesting, because it suggests that all people (not just men) are both capable and desirous of taking more power than is naturally theirs. This supports my contention that feminism, ecocriticism, and gothic theory must be used in conjunction, because they are useless without the context of the others; if the *human* tendency is to oppress all things, this exercise has a restorative capacity for any minority. Reese posits that the text initiates a discourse on the possibilities of humanity, and questions what is particular to human consciousness that makes Victor and the creature curious and lonely, respectively. When *Frankenstein* is viewed with a gothic ecofeminist lens, the pattern of human behaviour towards perceived subordinates becomes much clearer. Frankenstein seeks power over nature, which will also imbue him with powers over other people; rather than companionship, Frankenstein seeks control, because they will “owe” him and he will “deserve” their gratitude. When such a false hierarchy is presumed, the retaliation of the many oppressed over the few oppressors seems inevitable, resulting in fearful (gothic) retribution. As a result, a common gothic trope is of the past wrongs violently rectified. Frankenstein fears the retribution of his offspring because he presumed too much of himself and his scientific ability; his capacity for human curiosity overwhelmed the actual capacity of human nature, and thus nature itself. He subordinated nature, feminized it, and now fears it, destroying himself because he is unable to assuage his curiosity.

Frankenstein incorrectly compartmentalizes his understanding of nature into two opposites: the positive aspects of the natural world, and the negative aspects of the human world. However, he only values the natural world while it serves his intentions; the negative aspects of the human world only become apparent when he “produces” the creature and the experiment fails. Victor reinforces the hierarchy of binaries that favours man over nature, making them oppositional because of his fear of the tensions between “real” nature and the piece of nature he

has artificially created. Frankenstein believes in a dichotomy between nature which is pure and innocent, and human nature, which has a capacity for knowledge tempted by error. Thus for Victor, his fear reinforces the social norms of what is human and inhuman. Shelley demonstrates that his temptation for knowledge leads to the destruction of his family, and even his life, because he is unable to accept the parts of his creature which make the spectrum of his identity human. Victor denounces his culpability in the making of his creature, begging Walton to “‘learn from me ... at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow’” (53). Frankenstein associates the naïveté of the secluded person in his or her town with a presumption of innocence. He believes that humans have the capacity for great knowledge, and it is the same capacity which will lead to their failure, because of their desire to know more than they should, or more than is possible, as he soon discovers by his experience. Frankenstein describes “secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn” and later denounces them as folly; his fervour to discover “the metaphysical, or in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world” (37) is replaced with a “breathless horror and disgust” (57) which fills his heart. Thus, nature becomes clouded by his own mistakes. By contrast, Clerval helps to restore him, and Frankenstein becomes delighted by “happy inanimate nature” (70) which “had the power of bestowing” on him “the most delightful sensations. A serene sky and verdant fields filled me with ecstasy. The present season was indeed divine” (70). His “ecstasy” and the characterization of nature as having divinity show a direct cognitive opposition with “human” nature. As soon as Victor is happy, nature becomes pleasing to him. He mistakenly presumes polarity from the creature, nature, and the women around him; while he tries to externalize himself from all of these things, if he noted the similarities he had with the creature and Elizabeth, he would have been implicitly acknowledging his existence on a spectrum of natural identity, thereby eliminating his own fears.

Mary Shelley's language in connection to nature fluctuates depending on the mood she depicts, indicating that nature becomes both bad and good depending on how it serves Victor. The creature comes to life on a “dreary night of November” (57) while the rain “pattered dismally

against the panes” (57), emphasizing the morose aspects of nature that occur during the events. By contrast, Clerval revives Victor; the latter states that the former “called forth the better feelings of my heart; he again taught me to love the aspect of nature” (70), and made Victor able to perceive “that the young buds were shooting forth from trees” (62) and “sentiments of joy and affection” begin to revive him. Even outside of gothic narrative it is common for weather, nature, and darkness to reflect the action, and for Victor, positive events are marked by “good” nature, and negative events are marked by “bad” nature. This dichotomy reminds us that there is a thematic similarity between the treatment of nature as either good or bad, and the treatment of the female with equal simplicity. While feminism and ecocriticism are united by their similar approaches to social problems, the gothic element in the text emphasizes this good and bad dichotomy; gothic ecofeminism allows us to see that the perceived duality of femininity and nature feeds Victor's fears. The spectrum of gender and nature might enable Victor to experience nature as a complex phenomenon, rather than a reflection of his mood.

The environment of *Frankenstein* demonstrates preconceived notions of natural beauty. Nature contains many different kinds of aesthetic types, which we judge and make use of as we see fit. The arctic wasteland in which the opening narrative takes place indicates an ambiguous aesthetic judgement. The ice is exceedingly dangerous, but Walton's optimism in achieving fame and fortune motivates him to see the benefit of crossing the icy plain. The mixture of beauty and terror of the ice is a reflection of the contradictory sublimity with which most characters view nature. Walton values the dangerous and mysterious aesthetic of the arctic, saying

‘I may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle; and may regulate a thousand celestial observations, that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent for ever. I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited.’ (16)

Walton sees the power of the sublime nature and feels both awed by its magnitude and attracted to its beauty and danger. Rather than value the dangerous beauty of his surroundings, Frankenstein's purpose will lead him to destruction and death. The creature's appearance and the landscape make us question the validity of our intent. Does one desire to save nature simply on

the basis of its beauty, or is it necessary to appreciate a phenomenon for its own sake rather than for its utility to humans? Frankenstein chooses to try to destroy the creature at his own peril, suggesting that although the aesthetic quality can be a powerful motivating factor in our appreciation of the subordinate, perhaps a change in the subjectivity of the aesthetic is necessary in order to appreciate the value of nature. Walton and Frankenstein only appreciate nature when it is to their benefit or has some kind of aesthetic value; both eventually must learn that the aesthetic of nature is not without the ugliness of danger. Nature's beauty is best viewed on a spectrum to prevent the possibility of abuse; nature should be viewed as capable of protecting itself, rather than an object to be consumed.

The discovery and use of nature are also gendered and eroticized. The feminine is often unconsciously linked to passivity; likewise, nature is seen as having passive qualities, meant to be actively discovered. Jean-François Lyotard writes that nature is

Conceived as spatial territory, as the land or earth which is tamed and tilled ... Nature is allegorized as either a powerful maternal force ... or as the site of sexual enticement and ultimate seduction. Nature is both the generative source, but also the potential spouse of science, to be wooed, won, and if necessary forced to submit to intercourse. (141)

Rape metaphors are problematic because they not only trivialize the real act of rape, but also anthropomorphize and essentialize nature. However, the violation that Lyotard's metaphor denotes is important for feminist ecocriticism. Nature is acted upon without care or consent, and it is seen as a conquest for many, including Victor. Frankenstein genders and eroticizes his work, undertaking his study "with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to *her* hiding-places" (54; emphasis mine). That nature is "hiding" indicates that it is both passive and non-consenting. Botting also notes Frankenstein's overtly sexual language, stating in *Making Monstrous: Frankenstein, Criticism, Theory*:

Frankenstein's attempts to unfold these secrets are phrased in quasi-sexual terms: like a lover courting his beloved he 'pursued nature to her hiding places' ... But, 'insensible to the charms of nature,' he desires only one thing, 'embued with a fervent longing to penetrate the secrets of nature.' It seems, indeed, that female nature is to be ravished by

the masculine desires for sexual conquest. (97)

As Frankenstein later discovers, his meddling goes terribly wrong. The positive side of his nature dichotomy is associated with the “maternal force” that Lyotard distinguishes; the buds of spring (62) connote a sense of innocence attached to reproduction. Victor's reproduction of the creature initially gives him the sense that he has godlike powers, demonstrating his desire for control.

When nature is gendered feminine in the sense that it is passive and therefore most easily violated, gothic anxieties are brought to mind. Sexual violation is connected to fears of the body, especially of its differences or deformities; fears of control, or lack thereof; and fears related to the subordinate seeking revenge upon the dominant. And those are just the fears of the oppressor; for the victim, sexual domination, being “forced to submit to intercourse” if “necessary,” is an extremely frightening prospect. Frankenstein's eroticized control over nature strikes a chord in unconscious societal fears of the consequences of meddling. His non-consenting creature revenges itself upon him, confirming societal fears of feminized deviance.

The Creature as Human, Nonhuman, or Agent of Nature

Frankenstein's creature, although created by humans, has more in common with nature than he does with manmade objects. There is an irony in the fact that Frankenstein attempts to control nature to create beauty, with the result that the product is deformed and ugly, and unmistakably manmade. Despite his human origins, the creature may be seen as the “revenge” of nature. One might argue that, because he is the deformed result of empirical meddling by humans, the creature is the outcome of the bastardization of nature by humans. Perhaps the creature speaks for the environment. The creature seems to be the result of nature penalizing Frankenstein for overstepping his human capacity. Frankenstein appears to be a typical exemplum of human behaviour; just as he prodded at the limitations of nature, western society has subordinated and oppressed the peoples of perceived unequal social standing. Frankenstein's actions show a patterned set of behaviours towards the oppressed, demonstrating that his actions are not unique to him, but perhaps the result of a societal tendency to think in binary forms. But just because the creature is bastardized means he is no less part of nature; in fact, because he is subordinated by Victor and treated with disdain by everyone, he is associated in the social

dichotomy with the negative part of the social binary. He is thereby feminized and naturalized. Just as nature has a perceived “good” and “bad” side, the creature's “bad” qualities are equally arbitrary. Because he does not represent Frankenstein's association of “good” nature, the creature becomes a monster. The likely – one might even say “natural” – outcome of the manmade human becoming disfigured demonstrates that nature can protect itself from such abnormalities. The creature's naturalness comes from his mind; he is of inherent value to nature because he is capable of rationality, of growth, and of intellect. The creature demonstrates that, by nature, he is sensitive and caring. However, it is the way he is nurtured that makes him monstrous.

Relationships Between Characters

Victor's relationship to his foster sister Elizabeth is marked by his explicit possessiveness.¹⁶ She is the “inmate of my parents' house – my more than sister – the beautiful and adored companion of all my occupations and my pleasures” (35). Victor repeats the sentiment that Elizabeth is his “more than sister” twice; in the second iteration, he continues, “since til death she was to be mine only” (36). The word “death” foreshadows the horrific death she will suffer. In addition, since she is one of the few visible female characters, it is significant that Victor mentally possesses her within his perception of the household. It suggests that the female's role is secondary to the needs of the male, which is similar to how Victor behaves towards other subordinates. She is also the companion of “his” pleasures, indicating that their relationship is based on her utility to him. His perception of her via her utility begins with his mother presenting her as if she is a gift for Victor. She says, “I have a pretty present for my Victor – tomorrow he shall have it” (35). Victor continues:

When, on the morrow, she presented Elizabeth to me as her promised gift, I, with childish seriousness, interpreted her words literally and looked upon Elizabeth as mine – mine to

¹⁶ The 1818 edition edited by D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf has Elizabeth as Victor's cousin “the only child” (65) of Victor's father's deceased sister. The 1831 edition as edited by Johanna Smith describes Elizabeth as “the daughter of a Milanese nobleman. Her mother was a German, and had died on giving her birth” (41). Elizabeth's original foster family was a peasant family that Caroline Frankenstein encounters through charity work. The 1831 edition goes into great detail regarding Elizabeth's captivating aspects: “She appeared of a different stock ... Her hair was the brightest living gold, and ... seemed to set a crown of distinction on her head” (40). Shelley's increased emphasis on Elizabeth between editions suggests that she wanted to expand the impression of Victor's reverence; the “heaven-sent” and “celestial” (41) girl is viewed through the lens of Victor's possessive infatuation.

protect, love, and cherish. All praises bestowed on her I received as made to a possession of my own. (35-6)

Victor's literal interpretation puts himself as the superior being to his surroundings, prefiguring his relationship to nature because it demonstrates a pervading sense that he views objects on the basis of their utility. Reese's suggestion that *Frankenstein* is about "man becoming man" is applicable in this case, as well; is Frankenstein's reaction to Elizabeth a reaction of his personality, or is Shelley suggesting that the natural instinct of all people is towards ownership? Perhaps the procurement of possessions is part of "becoming" a man. Victor claims to love Elizabeth, but she is still a possession first and foremost, and the "praises bestowed on her" (36) become part of how he conceptualizes himself. As part of "becoming a man," Victor must possess the objects around him which lack a dominant power; in this case, Elizabeth. Victor cannot view her as an autonomous person.

Indeed, Victor conceptualizes the creature in regards to how it reflects upon himself; it seems that any creature he calls "his own" becomes a part of his own identity. Victor thereby creates a being to reflect his own pride; he is not guided by fear until after the creation of his monster, when he begins to see "how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge" as he indeed becomes "greater than his nature will allow" (53). When he declares that his new species would "bless" him as its "creator and source" (54), he indicates that part of his personality is to take the inherent value of his perceived subordinates and apply that to himself. He wants both the beauty of his sister and his creation to reflect upon himself and make himself greater. He claims that his creatures will "owe their being" (54) to him. His aspirations to become "greater than his nature will allow" (53) are only realized as folly when the horror of the monster transpires. Victor's principle of ownership over both his sister and his creation is likely a reflection of Shelley's awareness of the movement for the rights of women, which serves as one of the intellectual ancestors of gothic ecofeminist theory.¹⁷ Ecofeminist theory suggests the notion that women and

¹⁷ Diane Long Hoeveler writes that Mary Wollstonecraft was "a woman plagued by her attempts to reconcile the needs of her mind with her body" (47) through her political work; despite her mother dying days after her birth, Mary Shelley is both personally and socially conditioned by Wollstonecraft's work, given that Wollstonecraft was not only her mother, but a controversial sociopolitical figure. Pamela Clemit writes about the profound impact that Mary Shelley's parents have on her in "*Frankenstein and Matilda*, and the legacies of Godwin and Wollstonecraft."

nature are equally subordinated, but it is not out of a value that they possess, but out of a set of behaviours recognizable in the oppressor, in this case Frankenstein. His fear of revenge by the creature on behalf of nature demonstrates the gothic trope which serves as metaphor for how societal fear gets in the way of social progress; by Shelley's reckoning, nature is capable of avenging itself upon its abusers. Furthermore, Elizabeth is trapped in a world where she is given very little agency for determining the outcome of her life. Frankenstein's presumed ownership of Elizabeth demonstrates that gothic ecofeminism is necessary to see how the female body is subordinated, naturalized, pacified, and feared if she challenges social expectations.

Victor sets up a dichotomy between his epistemology and his sister's that is indicative of his blanket subordination of both females and nature. He describes the differences in their aptitudes from a young age. He says, "I was capable of a more intense application, and was more deeply smitten with the thirst for knowledge" (36). By contrast, Elizabeth

busied herself with following the aerial creations of the poets; and in the majestic and wonderous scenes which surrounded our Swiss home ... the mountains; the changes of the seasons; tempest and calm; the silence of winter, and the life and turbulence of our Alpine summers – she found ample scope for admiration and delight. While my companion contemplated with a serious and satisfied spirit the magnificent appearances of things, I delighted in investigating their causes. (36)

Not only is Elizabeth connected to nature through her study of it, she is within the Platonic dichotomy by being placed on the side of art and emotion, by being connected with the "aerial" delights of poets; she becomes the passive learner, while Victor is more active and aggressive.¹⁸ Victor constructs himself as her opposite, as the being most capable of rational thought and reason, by aligning himself with the "causes" of all things. The feminine is doubly dichotomized and subordinated as a result of her association with nature; she delights in "shapes," "seasons," and even "silence." She may also appreciate "life and turbulence" according to Victor, but she deigns not to investigate the cause, insinuating that she maintains a lesser frame of mind. Mary K.

¹⁸ "The one central belief common to Plato and his followers .. is that of the two worlds. The first, which is intelligible ... by the intellect ... The second, which is sensible ... by the senses, is not real in itself; its value is in the fact that it is a copy of the real world of Forms." Isabel Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry* (33).

Patterson Thornburg writes that, to Victor, “masculinity implies intellectual passion, the physical man trained to the spiritual purpose of knowing.” She continues that Victor is

Convinced that [he is] acting for the good of mankind. ... Although both Victor and Walton are at times aware that their quests are essentially compulsive, courses of action embarked upon almost against their wills, they both rationalize by stressing the intellectual and humanitarian values of what they are attempting to achieve. Neither considers that he is pursuing a dangerous and relatively useless course because of the sheer emotional excitement it affords him. (69)

As Frankenstein struggles to categorize the creature, the latter is metaphorically isolated, subordinated, and put on the same othered plane as the woman and nature; the creature struggles equally in his attempts to self-identify, but Victor's needs are elevated at the expense of the creature's needs. The creature effectively breaks the dichotomy by not fitting within it. The broken dichotomy is also a fixture in gothic theory because it represents the unknown and the fluctuation of norms. The normalized structure of society ceases to function with the existence of the creature, causing chaos, both socially and intellectually. The social dichotomy is both upheld and broken within the text, suggesting both the dynamism of feminism and ecocriticism, but also the barriers that gothic tropes provide.

The creature's relationship to women and desire for companionship are also indicative of the complex relationship between the gothic and the feminine. Upon murdering William in his rage, the creature sees the picture of Elizabeth on the necklace: “In spite of my malignity. It softened and attracted me. For a few moments I gazed with delight on her dark eyes, fringed by deep lashes, and her lovely lips” (143). The creature eroticizes the picture, which enables him to voice the idea of having the companionship of a woman. The creature shows desire for a woman which is not based on the same possessiveness that compels Victor. The creature explains to Frankenstein,

“What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate. I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself; the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me. It is true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account

we shall be more attached to one another.” (145-6)

The creature does not want to have companionship in order to achieve possession, showing a strong contrast with his maker. His desires are a product of loneliness, and not to have another being praise or thank him. The humility of his request suggests that his self-deprecation has encouraged respect for the proposed companion, or at least respect in comparison with Frankenstein. The creature continues, “‘our lives will not be happy, but they will be harmless, and free from the misery I now feel ... make me happy ... Let me see that I excite the sympathy of some existing thing; do not deny me my request!’” (146). Frankenstein's ultimate inability to make the creature happy and give him the “sympathy” that he demands demonstrates that Victor is still crippled by his social construction of himself; he is unable to see the creature as more than a subordinate. He denies the creature love and hypocritically keeps the love of Elizabeth for himself: “the one reward I promised myself from my detested toils – one consolation for my unparalleled sufferings; it was the prospect of that day when, enfranchised from my miserable slavery, I might claim Elizabeth, and forget the past in union with her” (153). Victor's hypocrisy is obvious, as he thinks that his sufferings are “unparalleled” (153) by the creature; he does not see that in trying to forget his own past while not allowing the same freedom or “enfranchisement” for his creature, Victor is treating the creature with the same subservience he has throughout the text. He denies the humanity of the creature by denying his desire for companionship, and thereby incites the creature's revenge upon himself.

The Creature's Morality

The creature resists being categorized as either “man” or “nature” because of the fear with which he has been treated. His initial resistance to the boundaries of beauty, masculinity, and nature is latent; he does not desire to exist outside of these categorizations. Even as Victor struggles with his awkward relationship with nature and his childless masculinity, the creature desires the categorization which will make him feel as if he belongs. And yet, even Victor cannot fit within the binaries, so how can they be a useful structure? The creature's subordination can be revealed by feminist and ecocritical scholars, but it is the gothic criticism of his character which allows us to see how fear creates conflicts between groups; transgression of boundaries is

universally followed with suspicion and hatred. The creature refers to his reading of *Paradise Lost* saying,

“Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous ... but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me.”
(129)

The creature does not fit into the creation story, the archetype of human existence, so he identifies more with evil; because he is forced to think of the polar opposites of identity (God vs. Satan, good vs. evil), and the side that he analogizes as God will not take him, he feels that he must identify with Satan in order to find an “emblem” for his “condition.” The creature identifies as a subject of God because of his creation by his “father,” and yet he feels most attached to the emblem of evil, because the external locus of his self-perception is so mired by negativity. While the creature has a moment of self-awareness when he sees his reflection and realizes his own ugliness, his hideous visage may yet at that point still be balanced by his temperament, if given the chance. Victor's journal gives the creature a detailed account of how horrifically his parent-figure views him:

“The minutest description of my odious and loathsome person is given, in language which painted [Victor's] own horrors, and rendered mine indelible. I sickened as I read ...
‘Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even *you* turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance.’” (130)

Victor's journal, a record of his offences against nature, gives the creature a “sickness” and “horror.” The language of pain the creature employs incites him to violence, ultimately causing him to retaliate against his creator. To add insult to injury, the creature admits “‘Satan had his companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and abhorred’” (130). In addition to his ugliness and the abandonment he suffers, no one will attempt to become his

companion and take the place of the person who should be his parent. Victor and his creature transgress the boundaries of parent-child, male-female, human- inhuman, nature-artifice, beauty-ugliness, and good-evil, and attempt to place themselves on a spectrum between identifying markers, but are punished for mobility within the binary pairings. Gothic ecofeminism encourages the use of a complex approach to identity, suggesting that the creature is not motivated by being entirely “good” or “evil”; rather, he is a product of several moral choices made by his master and then himself. His actions are justified by his existence on a spectrum of moral choice, rather than polarity. The spectrum of morality enables us to see that the end result of the creature's good or bad behaviour is not defined by a single choice, but by multiple choices informed by the reinforced social binaries that make up his mangled identity, and the fear that accompanies his inability to fit solidly within any defining social marker.

Conclusion

The way out of antagonism in environmental relations, between genders, and other areas of tension, is to diminish the tendency to create binaries. A gothic ecofeminist approach to *Frankenstein* demonstrates how the environment, which is traditionally feminized, becomes a location of fear and anxiety. In addition, the feminine body, which is naturalized in the Platonic tradition, is also feared. The spectrum offered by gothic ecofeminism enables us to see how feminism, ecofeminism, and the gothic overlap. What I call gothic ecofeminism in itself is a creature; it is a conglomerate of multiple pieces, all creating a critical whole that is complex and intriguing.¹⁹ Gothic ecofeminist theory is useful because it explores the relationship between humans and their actions towards perceived subordinates, as well as the fear that often accompanies the perception of difference between perceived dominant and perceived groups. Reese's idea that *Frankenstein* is about “man becoming man” is relevant because it suggests the figurative mankind as well as the man who embodies masculinity. Figurative man reacts with fear to the unknown, and either overcomes this fear or does not. Literal man, as part of the patriarchal

¹⁹ In her edition of *Frankenstein*, Johanna M. Smith writes that the text can be viewed as a metaphorical puzzle: She states that, according to Fred Botting, the text is

Not just as a work containing a monster but as a monstrous text ... It is an “assemblage” of pieces – a novel containing diverse fragments of poetry, myth, philosophy, history, and folktale – and also because it “occupies an unstable space” between “literary tradition and popular culture” undermining the autonomy of each by an extreme form of both. (432)

system, becomes a man by subordinating nature and the female, and using the fear that comes from those two ideas to reassure his power. Fear obstructs the possibilities of ecocriticism and feminism to create change. Frankenstein is unable to overcome his own fears as well as the fears placed on him by his masculine role, and therefore becomes the representation of both literal and figurative man. Victor oppresses those he perceives as subordinate not because he is a man, or even a villain, but because of the monster that society has created within him. The creature also becomes a monster because the nurturing and companionship he desires are denied him by the person who should have his interests at heart: his parent. By viewing a text with these three literary theories, we begin to see that there are parallels to human treatment and fear of perceived subordinates. Women are not dominated solely because of patriarchy, and the environment is not only destroyed by international corporations; these are the traditional culprits, but just as blaming Victor and the creature on a spectrum of “good” vs. “evil” is too simplistic, so is blaming men and money for subordination of minorities. Rather, a gothic ecofeminist approach to *Frankenstein* demonstrates a patterned set of dominant human behaviours when responding to both human and non-human difference; the tendency to create binaries is widespread, belonging not to a single group, but all people. The development of a spectrum of overlapping identities enables us to see that we are all just a little bit monstrous.

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